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ABSTRACT

This checklist is intended to give school governing board members a means of assessing their meeting practices. The checklist contains five categories, with a total of 80 questions, pertaining to meeting-management variables common to all governing boards. The categories include: (1) preparation for the meetings; (2) operation of the meetings; (3) decision-making during the meetings; (4) board member participation during the meetings; and (5) procedures following the meetings. Questions marked with an asterisk can be answered and scored for a quick, abbreviated assessment. (JW)

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GOVERNING BOARD MEETING MANAGEMENT CHECKLIST

Developed by Dr. Don E. Halverson

March 1981

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GOVERNING BOARD MEETING MANAGEMENT CHECKLIST

Directions:

This checklist is intended to give school governing Board members a means of assessing their governing Board meeting practices.

The checklist contains five categories of meeting management variables common to all governing Board meetings. These categories are:

A. Preparation for the meetings
B. Operation of the meetings
C. Decision-making during the meetings
D. Board member participation during the meetings
E. Procedures following the meetings

Under each meeting management variable are several items to which you should respond. The categories of responses range from 1 to 4 with 1 considered to be "ideal."

Please circle the number in the column which represents typical practice for the Board meeting you are assessing.

As a check against good practice, you may also want to put an "X" beside each item which would indicate the way you feel your Board meeting should operate. Totaling the number of variables will give you a general idea of the status of your governing Board meetings as a comparison between the way you perceive them to be and the way you would like them to become.

It might also be interesting to compare perceptions of staff members with the perceptions of Board members.

For those who enjoy numerical ratings, a score of 50 is the top score which would represent the "most effective" meeting. A score of 200 is the poorest score.

NOTE: For those who desire an abbreviated version you may check only the items which are asterisked. This will give you a quick assessment of 20 major items (top score = 20; poorest score = 80)

Developed by Dr. Don E. Halverson, Assistant Superintendent, San Mateo County Office of Education, March 1981

Other resources available include:

1. CSBA, "BOARDSMANSHIP," Chapter 5, Board Meetings, 1979
2. CSBA, "THE SCHOOL BOARD LOOKS AT ITSELF," unpublished field testing document, July 1977
3. Doyle, Michael and Straus, David, "HOW TO MAKE MEETINGS WORK," Wyden Books, 1976
4. Halverson, Don E., "EFFECTIVE MEETING MANAGEMENT," San Mateo County Office of Education, 1977
Educational Research Service, Inc., "EVALUATING SUPERINTENDENTS AND SCHOOL BOARDS," Arlington, VA 1976

GOVERNING BOARD MEETING MANAGEMENT CHECKLIST

A. PREPARATION FOR THE MEETING:

*	1.	Board meeting facilities provide the "best" environment for board meetings.	1	2	3	4	The Board meets in whatever facilities are available regardless of their adequacy.
	2.	The Board conducts its meetings with seating arrangements which allow the district's business affairs to be conducted by the Board and its administrative staff.	1	2	3	4	Little or no thought is given to Board or staff seating arrangements.
	3.	At Board meetings the audience is placed in a position to make a clear line of demarcation between themselves and the Board.	1	2	3	4	The audience sits with or alongside of Board members at Board meetings.
	4.	The Board selects its president on the basis of his/her ability to conduct meetings and to perform effectively rather than on seniority/ rotation.	1	2	3	4	Seniority is the major or even the only criterion for selection of the Board president.
	5.	The Board has a set procedure so that Board members can get items on the agenda without undue difficulty.	1	2	3	4	Board members have difficulty getting items on the Board agenda.
	6.	Board members have adequate time to review the agenda prior to the meetings.	1	2	3	4	The agenda is not in the hands of Board members in sufficient time for adequate review prior to the meeting.
	7.	New items of a complex nature are not introduced for action if they are not listed on the agenda but are presented for listing on a subsequent agenda for consideration and action.	1	2	3	4	Board members are often "surprised" by requests for action on complex agenda items without adequate notice.

* 8.	Each Board member makes a sincere effort to read and to be informed on all agenda items listed prior to the meetings.	1	2	3	4	Some Board members come to Board meetings without having read the supporting information about agenda items.
* 9.	Each agenda item has an approximate amount of time allocated to it for proper meeting time planning.	1	2	3	4	Agenda items are not timed.
10.	Board meetings have a pre-determined closing time as a goal.	1	2	3	4	No pre-determined closing time is set for Board meetings.
* 11.	Routine agenda items are acted upon through a consent calendar procedure.	1	2	3	4	The Board "agonizes" over each agenda item regardless of its importance or complexity.
12.	Arrangements are made for appropriate media access to Board meetings.	1	2	3	4	The media is disregarded or ignored in planning for Board meetings.
13.	The Board has established written policies for conducting meetings which include provision for the public to be heard, but prevent a single individual or group from dominating or controlling discussions.	1	2	3	4	The Board has no policies or by-laws for proper conduct of its meetings.
* 14.	Public expression on individual agenda items is allowed for <u>before</u> the Board deliberates and decides.	1	2	3	4	Members of the audience express their opinions freely at any time during Board discussions or deliberations.
* 15.	Provision is made <u>early</u> on the agenda for public oral communications which do not pertain to specific agenda items.	1	2	3	4	Members of the audience are not permitted to address the Board about concerns <u>not</u> on the agenda or must sit through the meeting and address the Board at the end of the meeting.

16.	Board members set study sessions upon occasion to deal in depth with important issues.	1	2	3	4	The Board seldom, if ever, sets study sessions.
17.	Closed (executive) sessions are held only when needed.	1	2	3	4	The Board holds closed (executive) sessions almost routinely.
* 18.	The Board adheres strictly to the provisions set forth in the law for closed sessions.	1	2	3	4	Closed sessions are used by the Board to discuss items which Board members prefer not to discuss in public regardless of whether the subject of discussion meets Brown Act provisions.

B. OPERATION OF THE MEETING:

19.	Board meetings begin on time.	1	2	3	4	Board meetings are almost always late in beginning.
* 20.	Board meetings are paced so as to complete the agenda and finish at or near the pre-determined closing time.	1	2	3	4	Board meetings are not paced so that items late on the agenda are often hurried due to the lateness of the hour.
21.	The Board president adheres generally to the time allocated to each item.	1	2	3	4	Even when a specified time is allocated to an agenda item, the Board president pays little attention to the limits.
* 22.	Agenda items are reviewed and any changes in priority are set by the Board as an early item on the Agenda.	1	2	3	4	The agenda is followed as printed without regard for any need to change the order of items depending on circumstances.
23.	Closure on each agenda item is obtained before the Board moves to the next item.	1	2	3	4	The Board moves from one item to the next without specific action or closure being effected on the prior item.

24.	The Board president truly runs the meetings and is not just a "figure-head".	1	2	3	4	The Board president rarely, if ever, controls the meeting; it generally runs itself.
* 25.	The Board president controls audience participation so that such participation does not interfere with Board deliberations.	1	2	3	4	The Board president permits audience interruption or participation to such an extent that Board deliberations or decision-making is sometimes disrupted.
26.	During Board meetings questions directed at staff are processed through the Superintendent.	1	2	3	4	Questions are routinely asked of staff members instead of directing them through the Superintendent.
27.	Board members are aware that Board meetings are "meetings held in public; not public meetings".	1	2	3	4	Board meetings more nearly resemble "Town Hall Meetings" than Board deliberation / decision-making meetings of elected officials.

C. DECISION-MAKING DURING THE MEETING:

* 28.	In discussing agenda items the Board thinks through the problems and their causes before reaching decision.	1	2	3	4	There is a tendency for the Board to propose answers without really thinking through the problems and their causes.
29.	When problems come up in the meetings they are thoroughly explored until everyone understands what the problem is.	1	2	3	4	Decisions are often reached before all Board members really understand the problem.
* 30.	The Board withholds definitive Board action until after a Superintendent recommendation is requested and presented.	1	2	3	4	The Superintendent is rarely, if ever, asked for a recommendation.
31.	Superintendent recommendations are accepted as well-thought-out professional recommendations.	1	2	3	4	Board members often completely disregard the Superintendent's recommendation or consider it a personal rather than a professional recommendation.

32.	Board members discuss the pros and cons of several different alternate solutions to a problem before making a decision.	1	2	3	4	Alternate solutions to a problem are rarely considered by the Board in making its decision.
* 33.	When conflicts over decisions come up, the Board does not avoid them, but stays with the conflicts and works them through.	1	2	3	4	The reasons or causes of Board member conflicts or disagreements are seldom addressed.
34.	Solutions and decisions are in accord with full discussion and deliberation so that all members have full attention paid to their point of view.	1	2	3	4	The Board president makes full use of the "power" of the chairmanship to obtain decisions which agree with his or her point of view.
35.	The Board makes timely decisions even when controversy is "inevitable."	1	2	3	4	The Board procrastinates on difficult decisions.
* 36.	The Board attempts to arrive at decisions which express a consensus before formalized votes are taken.	1	2	3	4	Motions are made and seconded before full discussion takes place thus resulting in retraction of motions and seconds, failure to obtain seconds to motions, or frequent minority votes due to lack of discussion.
37.	When a decision is made, it is clear who should carry it out and when.	1	2	3	4	Decisions are often unclear as to how and by whom they are to be implemented.
* 38.	Board members feel committed to carrying out the decisions made by the Board no matter what their personal feelings might be.	1	2	3	4	After a formal Board decision has been made, some Board members do not support the implementation of the decision or actively sabotage it.

D. <u>BOARD MEMBER PARTICIPATION DURING THE MEETING</u>:

* 39.	Board members strive to work closely together as a Board for the benefit of the students and avoid negative "political" practices such as alliances, trade-offs, etc.	1	2	3	4	There are splits or deadlocks between factions or subgroups of the Board.

40.	Genuine disagreement among Board members based on principle is openly recognized and accommodated without adverse criticism or acrimony.	1	2	3	4	When there is disagreement among Board members, it tends to be smoothed over or avoided.
* 41.	Board members feel free to state their opinions or ask questions without fear of criticism or ridicule.	1	2	3	4	Some Board members remain silent during the meetings even when they have something to contribute for fear of criticism or rebuke.
42.	Board members keep their comments or questions focused on the agenda item under discussion.	1	2	3	4	Some Board members continually bring up extraneous or irrelevant matters.
43.	Board members use Board meeting time for genuine discussion and problem solving.	1	2	3	4	Individual Board members use Board meetings as a forum for lengthy presentations on their "pet" projects or to "play to the audience."
44.	The Board president makes certain all Board members have equal opportunity to present their views.	1	2	3	4	The same few Board members do most of the talking during the meetings.
* 45.	Board members take care to be positive and constructive when commenting on the work of the superintendent or the staff.	1	2	3	4	At Board meetings some Board members make negative, derisive, or even punitive statements about the superintendent or staff.

E. PROCEDURES FOLLOWING THE MEETINGS:

46.	Minutes of meetings are distributed within a specified time following the meeting.	1	2	3	4	Minutes of meetings are almost always late.
* 47.	Board minutes are an accurate record of each Board action.	1	2	3	4	Board minutes are normally in substantial error of actions taken, contain extraneous comments, or reflect omissions.

48.	Responsibility for staff action is recorded where appropriate.	1	2	3	4	Minutes do not contain information as to staff action or date/time that action is expected.
49.	The confidentiality of closed sessions is strictly observed as required by law.	1	2	3	4	Board members sometimes "leak" comments on deliberations held in closed session.
* 50.	Board meetings are evaluated periodically by members to assess their effectiveness including process as well as content and are reviewed and changed as suggestions are evaluated.	1	2	3	4	Board meetings are not evaluated for their effectiveness nor are they open to review or change.